



Directorate of
Intelligence

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DATE 8/14/86 File 80

DOC NO NESA M 86-20127CX
SOVA M 86-20071CX

OIR 1 79

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Afghanistan Situation Report

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12 August 1986

79-81 IMC/CB

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AFGHANISTAN SITUATION REPORT



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A major counterinsurgent operation in Vardak Province to reduce the threat of ambushes to convoys on the Kabul-Ghazni road has ended,



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TROUBLE IN THE RESISTANCE ALLIANCE



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Divisions among Afghan insurgent leaders over foreign policy, including the recent visit of resistance alliance representatives to the US and plans to open overseas offices, are intensifying strains in the fragile alliance.



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ARAB INFLUENCE ON AFGHAN EDUCATION PROGRAMS



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Attempts by conservative Arabs of the Wahhabi sect to gain ideological control over Afghan educational programs in Peshawar could weaken the influence of the resistance alliance's education committee and fan dissension among the insurgents.



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IN BRIEF

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PERSPECTIVE

THE WAR IN JULY



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Combat activity remained at a fairly high level in July as the Soviets and Afghan regime conducted large operations in northern Afghanistan and south of Kabul. The insurgents continued to deny enemy



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forces control of Herat and Qandahar--despite intensive counterinsurgent operations in those cities--and guerrilla forces increased attacks in the capital.

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INSURGENT ACTIVITY PROMPTS SOVIET-AFGHAN COMBAT OPERATIONS

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Soviet and Afghan forces concluded a major operation last week to interdict insurgent supply lines and push guerrilla units away from a key highway in Vardak Province, although the offensive is unlikely to have eliminated the threat of ambushes and the area is still held by the insurgents.

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a 32-kilometer-long convoy of some 700 vehicles returning to Kabul from this operation.

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According to the US Embassy in Kabul, another large Soviet-Afghan operation south of Kabul may have been underway by 10 August. Soviet transport helicopters ferried troops southward, and a large armored convoy left Kabul under the cover of darkness. The Embassy reports that Soviet forces--apparently responding to increased insurgent activity in Lowgar Province in recent weeks--cleared a swath adjacent to the main road from Kabul to help prevent guerrilla attacks.

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Elsewhere, the US Embassy indicates that the insurgents overran some of the outposts in the Soviet-Afghan defensive perimeter around Qandahar. Guerrilla forces remain in control of the city.

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TROUBLE IN THE RESISTANCE ALLIANCE

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Afghan resistance leader Rabbani recently told US officials that Gulbuddin and Savvaf, the fundamentalist leaders who publicly opposed the Rabbani-led delegation's visit to the US in June, are also against establishing resistance alliance offices in New York and Jeddah--a move five other leaders favor. Rabbani said that the alliance "must break out of the present setup," referring to the five-versus-two split in its leadership, and mentioned bringing some Hazara Shia

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groups into the alliance. Current alliance spokesman Moiafedi said the plans to form a government-in-exile were running into problems because of the fundamentalists, according to the US Embassy in Islamabad. Gulbuddin was insisting that an election be the sole means of selecting representatives to a resistance council, which would then form a government-in-exile. Other groups favored appointing representatives in areas where an election could not be held. [REDACTED]

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COMMENT: Because alliance decisions are made by consensus rather than by majority vote, Gulbuddin and Savvaf effectively have veto rights over alliance policy. The other political leaders believe Pakistan could bring Gulbuddin and Savvaf in line by threatening to cut off their supplies and almost certainly suspect Islamabad of working against alliance unity. Islamabad probably believes unity, even if attainable, would be undesirable because a united resistance could invite Soviet retaliation, restrict Pakistan's options in the peace talks, and give impetus to Pushtun separatism. [REDACTED]

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If the alliance collapses, insurgent leaders will want US support for any new resistance group they form. A new resistance grouping without Gulbuddin's and Savvaf's participation, however, would have less credibility because these leaders run two of the militarily most effective resistance groups inside Afghanistan. [REDACTED]

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ARAB INFLUENCE ON AFGHAN EDUCATION PROGRAMS [REDACTED]

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Conservative Arabs of the Wahhabi sect are using bribes to try to gain ideological control over Afghan educational programs in Peshawar, [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Members of the resistance alliance's education committee are paid from 2,000 to 20,000 Pakistani rupees a month--approximately \$118 to \$1180--depending on their willingness to take orders from the Arabs. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] 21 of the 42 members of the "ruling council" were handpicked by Wahhabis. The Wahhabis--most of whom are from Jordan, Egypt and Syria--push for incorporation of their fundamentalist views in Afghan textbooks. [REDACTED]

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COMMENT: The Wahhabis' interference in these programs undermines the legitimacy of the alliance's education committee and could cause dissension between the committee and individual resistance parties. Even so, many members of the education committee accept the funds but are not committed to the Wahhabi viewpoint.

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IN BRIEF

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-- Iran has agreed to allow the International Committee of the Red Cross to establish a clinic and quarantine post for Afghan refugees along the Afghan border, according to press reports. The announcement was made on 4 August while the United Nations High Commissioner for Afghan Refugee Affairs was in Tehran. The financial pressures of the war with Iraq have probably forced Tehran to reevaluate its position of refusing international aid for the refugees.

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-- The private voluntary organization (PVO) Solidarite Afghanistan received \$115,000 from the PVO Americares to establish an Afghan Teacher Training College (TTC) in Quetta, according to the US Consulate in Peshawar. Organizers plan to focus on training elementary school teachers. Classes will be conducted in Farsi rather than Pashto because of the higher concentration of Farsi speakers among Afghan refugees in Baluchistan. No firm date has been set for the opening of the college.

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-- Dr. Anahita Ratebzad--Politburo member and alleged mistress of Babrak Karmal--lost her position as president of the Democratic Organization of Afghan Women last week when the organization was renamed the National Council of Afghan Women. Afghan Communist Party leader Naimullah recently announced that comrade Feroza would be the new

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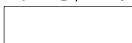
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council head and that Anahita would concentrate on her duties as chairman of the Peace, Solidarity and Friendship Organization. 


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- Pavel Petrovich Mozhaev recently arrived in Kabul to serve as the new Soviet ambassador to Afghanistan, according to press reports. He is now a candidate member of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party but is likely to become a full member. 

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- Beijing has elaborated on its initially terse response to Soviet leader Gorbachev's recent speech in Vladivostok, indicating that it views Gorbachev's proposals as deserving of serious consideration but that it remains skeptical of Soviet intentions. The Japanese news agency Kyodo reported that Deng Xiaoping told a visiting Japanese politician that the Gorbachev speech had "positive elements" but that it was "premature" to think that Gorbachev's speech "clearly reflected his foreign policy." 

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- Resistance forces are using Oerlikon antiaircraft guns in the Barikot area, according to the US Consulate in Peshawar. The Swiss-made guns are used against both air and ground targets and can be comparatively rapidly redeployed in the rugged terrain around Barikot, where the insurgents are besieging an Afghan Army outpost. 

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PERSPECTIVE**THE WAR IN JULY**

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Combat activity remained at fairly high levels in July, as Soviet and regime forces reacted to a surge in guerrilla attacks. Soviet and Afghan forces mounted large counterinsurgent operations east of Kunduz and in the Shevkhabad area. Fighting in Qandahar and Herat was intense at times as Soviet and regime forces tried unsuccessfully to expell the guerrillas from their strongholds, and the resistance penetrated Kabul's defenses and stepped up attacks in the capital. A special regime revolutionary tribunal tried in absentia and sentenced to death several prominent insurgent leaders for crimes against the government.

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Large Joint Operations Continue

The major Soviet-Afghan operation directed against the growing insurgent infrastructure in Takhar Province ended

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, the operation southeast of Konduz concentrated on reinforcing and resupplying Afghan Government garrisons,

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The month-long operation probably only temporarily interrupted the Jamiat-i-Islami expansion in the northern province, however. Units of the Soviet-Afghan task force withdrew completely from the operational area upon completion of the sweeps and contact with insurgent forces during the operation was relatively limited.

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Regime Tries to Tighten Its Grip on Qandahar

Soviet and Afghan forces continued efforts to tighten their hold on Qandahar during July. According to the US Embassy in Kabul, there was heavy fighting between the resistance and Afghan and Soviet forces in the city in mid-month, although the insurgents remained in control of much of the city at month's end. Establishment of new outposts to supplement existing security checkpoints around Qandahar have, however, slowed insurgent infiltration and placed major obstacles in the path of important insurgent supply routes. The US Embassy said that although the guerrillas in Qandahar are experiencing shortages of air defense weapons, they have managed so far to sustain operations with available materiel.

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Insurgent supply lines into Qandahar also are increasingly under pressure.

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Some insurgent groups have begun using more camels in an effort to move supplies over more difficult terrain, but this mode of transport will add to the time and expense of resistance logistics in the area.

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Heavy Fighting Continues in Other Urban Areas

Insurgent activity in the Kabul area increased last month. The US Embassy reported frequent explosions and gunfire. The insurgents launched a two-hour, coordinated rocket and small-arms attack against the Soviet Embassy on 16 July. Resistance rocket attacks against Soviet installations at Khevr Khaneh and Dar ol Aman continued in last July, and Embassy sources assert that the insurgents also overran five Soviet and Afghan posts in nearby Paghman.

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Heavy fighting continued in Herat through most of July, as major elements of a Soviet motorized rifle division

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and Afghan regime units attempted to clear the city of insurgents. After three weeks of combat that caused extensive damage to the city, Soviet units began returning to garrison, and Afghan leader Naitullah visited the area.

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Increased Insurgent Activity Elsewhere

Insurgent-initiated activity increased during July in many other areas. The guerrillas ambushed five Soviet convoys between 2 July and 11 July on the main road from the Salang area to the Shomali Plain, inflicting significant casualties and heavy vehicular losses, according to [redacted] US Embassy sources.

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Afghan Army Manpower Problems Continue

Despite tough new draft laws and increased efforts at conscription, the Afghan Army still has not made much progress in resolving its serious manpower shortages. The US Embassy reports that armed regime conscription teams have patrolled Kabul since the mid-June draft decree to round up all draft-eligible men.

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Tried in Absentia

Reflecting Naitullah's "get-tough" policy against the insurgency, the Afghan regime convened a special revolutionary tribunal that tried in absentia and sentenced to death several prominent insurgent commanders, including Ahmad Shah Masood, Ismail Khan, and Jalaluddin Haqqani. Kabul has tried in vain for months to secure a cease-fire with Masood, and the regime may believe this move will force the insurgent

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[REDACTED]

commander to consider seriously a truce and that it will intimidate other commanders into seeking an accommodation with the government. [REDACTED]

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Outlook

Soviet and Afghan regime efforts to reduce the insurgency in the cities of Herat and Qandahar and to re-exert control in Kabul are likely to remain a high priority. Bolstered security perimeters, which have been a major asset in constraining insurgent activity in Kabul, will be emphasized. Additionally, pressure on resistance supply lines from Pakistan will be maintained. Kabul's attempts to develop significantly larger and more capable armed forces will make little headway, and Afghan regime forces will remain dependent on the Soviets for any major counterinsurgency operation. [REDACTED]

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